

# THE FATHER

HENRY COPLEY GREENE

CERF

A most happy Christmas & Re  
present from Frederick R

To

Susan

With hearty good wishes  
for M<sup>th</sup> Christmas and  
New Years 1904 - 1905.



# THE FATHER





## PERSONS OF THE PLAY

JOHN WATSON	<i>A Capitalist</i>
MRS. WATSON	<i>His Wife</i>
RALPH	<i>Their Son</i>
MARGARETTA	<i>Their Daughter</i>
ELIZABETH WOOD	<i>A Singer</i>

TIME: *September, 1896*

PLACE: *Mr. Watson's house at Mount Desert*

THE  
FATHER  
A Drama

By  
HENRY COPLEY GREENE

*Author of*  
*“Pontius Pilate,” “Theophile,” “Plains and*  
*Uplands of France,” Etc., Etc.*

MCMV  
THE MONADNOCK PRESS  
NELSON, N. H.

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ACT I

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*The Parlor. Doors left and right. In the center, a table; on it, around a simple but handsome lamp, magazines, a novel or two, larger books, a portfolio, and some embroidery. Near the embroidery, two chairs, one standing askew. Against the right-hand wall and under a framed photograph of Lincoln, a stiff wooden chair; in the corner further back, an arm-chair. To the left of it, an open window, and nearer the middle a glass door, through both of which the darkening afterglow of sunset is seen. Over a corner fireplace to the left, on the brick mantelpiece, a vase of white roses and a photograph of Duse. Between them a cast of "La Femme Inconnue."*

*MARGARETTA turns from the window and stands glancing quickly back and forth from the roses to the photographs, takes a photograph of Elizabeth from the portfolio on the table, sets it beside the photograph of Duse, and seats herself in the rocking-chair.*

MRS. WATSON

*Entering left*

Not yet, Margaretta.

MARGARETTA

Who, Momps?

MRS. WATSON

Your father, dear.

MARGARETTA

Oh! Prob'ly he stopped in Bar Harbor—for grub, you know.

MRS. WATSON

*Gently*

“Grub”?

*Seating herself at the table and taking up the embroidery*

MARGARETTA

Well, *feed*, Mommy darling, if you prefer it.

MRS. WATSON

I really prefer English.

MARGARETTA

But Momps—

MRS. WATSON

Listen!

No.

MARGARETTA

What *are* you celebrating?

MRS. WATSON

I thought I heard the horn. I told Peters to blow it when he got to the turning, so that I could be at the door to meet your father.

Is that Elizabeth?

MARGARETTA

Sure.

MRS. WATSON

Why not have kept her with the rest of your friends?

MARGARETTA

*She's a celebrity; anyhow, she's going to be. And then, I want Pa to see her as soon as he arrives. So there she is—in his room, too, in case he goes right up.*

MRS. WATSON  
But he'll see her *herself*.

*Putting aside the embroidery*

MARGARETTA  
Will he? She's liable, you know, to  
take most as long coming from the beach  
as Dad from Idaho!

MRS. WATSON  
She *does* delight in it.

*After a pause*

MARGARETTA  
It's perfect fizz for her, specially when  
Ralph's along.

*With serious intensity*

MRS. WATSON  
And Ralph is 'along' now?

MARGARETTA  
Sure.

MRS. WATSON  
Margareta, do you realize how you mur-  
der the Queen's English?

MARGARETTA  
No worse than Elizabeth.

MRS. WATSON  
That's hardly true, dear, except when  
she makes fun of you. And even if  
it were true, she would be hardly a good  
model for you.

*Lighting the lamp*

Her mother could not give her your  
advantages; and in the last years she  
seems to have lived in really . . . rather

Bohemian surroundings . . . with singular sweetness, I admit. I am not condemning her. She's wonderfully kind to you, with her sunrise walks and her riding and singing; and then she has . . . well . . . the sort of genius that transfigures almost impossible remarks.

MARGARETTA

And capers?

MRS. WATSON

Yes, actions, too. Yet, some of them, even lit up with her special exquisiteness, I could hardly bear in my *daughter*.

MARGARETTA

Momps!

MRS. WATSON

Well, dear.

MARGARETTA

You wouldn't mind 'em, would you, in your *daughter-in-law*?

MRS. WATSON

It has n't come to that?

MARGARETTA

But s'pose it *bad*.

MRS. WATSON

Ralph would have told me.

MARGARETTA

Of course, dearest.

*On the arm of her mother's chair*

And they're not even engaged; at least,  
when they went out they were n't. I  
almost hope they are n't. They both  
seemed so ecstatically full of fears.  
Was yours like that?

*A pause*

MRS. WATSON

Your father's love and mine? Yes, dear,  
for a while.

MARGARETTA

"A while"?

MRS. WATSON

You *know* we're happy.

MARGARETTA

Um! I do know you're *good*. But  
sometimes, sometimes, you know, I do  
long to see you both, oh, just beautifully  
bad!

MRS. WATSON

That's worse than . . . Elizabeth.

MARGARETTA

*Looking her in the eyes*

How you hate her!

MRS. WATSON

No, in a way I almost love her. And  
yet—. Margaretta, do *you* think she  
cares for Ralph?

MARGARETTA

It's as plain as the nose on your dear  
sweet exquisite face!

MRS. WATSON

*Without a smile*

And if it is?

MARGARETTA

Dad won't object, will he?

MRS. WATSON

*Half to herself*

His letter —

MARGARETTA

*Interrupting*  
*Kissing her*

He wrote? You wrote about her?  
Oh, Mommy, dear, dear Mommy!

MRS. WATSON

*Disengaging herself*

Yes, I wrote, and I tried to be fair.  
But —

MARGARETTA

Sh-sh! —

Does n't that convince you?

MRS. WATSON

Her voice is beautiful; but the whole  
subject — of the opera, I mean — makes  
me shiver.

MARGARETTA

*Deprecatingly*

Hm. The brother and sister business?  
Yes?

But then, it's just symbolic, you know.  
Love and Spring and all that. Listen.  
Momps, don't trouble him with your  
prejudices! Do n't! Do n't! Think  
how he loves her!

*Elizabeth stops singing*

MRS. WATSON

*Am I prejudiced?*

*Getting up slowly*

Even without her gift it would be a problem, Margarettta; and with it, *can* a clash be avoided? Think of the conditions: Ralph settled, full of his problems, absorbed in work—and she, a singer, mixed up with managers, feted, excited, elated . . . Why, not one pair in a thousand—

MARGARETTA

*They're one in ten thousand!*

*Comically serious*

MRS. WATSON

Only character—character rooted in generations of strength—nothing else could carry it through. Why, even your father with all his strength could hardly —

MARGARETTA

*Have made a bang-up success of it?*  
P'raps not! But Ralph's had the benefit of *his* bringing up, and with Elizabeth—!

*Joyously*

MRS. WATSON

Yes. Perhaps—I hope so—perhaps my instincts *are* deceiving me.

ELIZABETH

Margarettta—!

*At the glass door, radiant  
A bit chilled as she sees Mrs.  
Watson*

I beg your pardon, Mrs. Watson. You were talking?

MARGARETTA

Yes, of Ralph and the beastly poisons and acids and . . . and burners and scales and reactions, and things that he keeps up there! And *Momps* thinks it'd be better if he'd loaf summers. I do n't, do you?

ELIZABETH

*Unconsciously*  
*Listening*

No-o . . . that is,—yes! Why, why *should* he work while all the world's a heaven of silver and crimson and sea music?

MARGARETTA

*To Mrs. Watson*  
Do you s'pose Dad thinks Idaho's like that?

*To Elizabeth*

By the way, dearest, where *is* Ralph?

ELIZABETH

Ralph? Oh, star-gazing somewhere.

MARGARETTA

Elizabeth!

MRS. WATSON

Could you tell me a little more exactly, Miss Wood? I should be sorry not to have him back when his father comes.

ELIZABETH

*Suddenly radiant*

*A moment's hesitation*

Then, then, then, Mr. Watson *has n't* come yet! Oh, I *am* glad. I *do* so want to see him, as soon as he arrives.

I've heard so much of him, Mrs. Wat-

son,—carrying the flag at Cold Harbor,  
when he was only a boy! and then later,  
his mines and the school for singers!  
and now, such bravery among the rioters!  
Is that he?

*Outside, a ring at the front door*

MARGARETTA

No; it can't be. Momps said Peters  
was to blow the horn when they got to  
the turning. Did n't you, Momps?

MRS. WATSON

Peters might have forgotten.

MARGARETTA

Peters never forgets.

ELIZABETH

But perhaps we did n't hear it.

MARGARETTA

Oh, I think so.

Biddies all off on a bat, Momps?

*Sarcastically*  
*The bell rings again*

ELIZABETH

Or perhaps Mr. Watson told Peters to  
keep still so that he could surprise you.

MARGARETTA

That's it!

*Starting toward the right-hand door*

MRS. WATSON

That might be it.

*Also turning*

MARGARETTA

No: I'll go.—Dad, Dad, is it you?

Dear old man!

ELIZABETH  
It must be he.

MARGARETTA  
*In the doorway*  
I should say not!

Sitting down again at the table

MRS. WATSON  
No, it is n't he.

MARGARETTA  
*Still in the doorway*  
*In the hall, outside*  
Thought you were Dad, Charley.  
Telegram? For him? Thanks. Office  
be open for an answer?

TELEGRAPH BOY  
*Outside*  
All night, Miss Watson.

MARGARETTA  
Good night.

TELEGRAPH BOY  
*Outside*  
Good night.

Margarettta, returning, begins  
to open the telegram

MRS. WATSON  
Margarettta! What are you thinking of?

*On the point of tossing it to  
her mother*

MARGARETTA  
That's so; it's the same one they  
'phoned over, two hours ago, of course.  
Cipher, too.  
You have n't got the code? Truly-ruly?  
So help you . . . Saint Patrick?

MRS. WATSON  
Certainly not.

MARGARETTA  
All right, then.

*Tossing the telegram into her lap*

ELIZABETH  
Well, that was n't Mr. Watson. But  
he 'll be here soon, I suppose.

MRS. WATSON  
I think I 'll take this to his room.  
Yes, he said he 'd be here *some* time this  
evening.

*Getting up*  
*Absently*

ELIZABETH  
Margareta.  
Oh, Margareta! Margareta

*She goes out to the right*

MARGARETTA  
Why, what *is* it?

*Her arms about her and her  
cheek against her forehead*  
*Drawing back a little, she  
looks at her*

*A pause*

ELIZABETH  
Dearest.

MARGARETTA  
Then . . . you and Ralph?

ELIZABETH  
Ralph and I?

MARGARETTA  
You *are* — ?

ELIZABETH  
Well?

MARGARETTA  
Are you?

*Kissing her softly and slowly*

ELIZABETH

Dearest!

MARGARETTA

Oh, I was off my trolley! when you said Ralph was "star-gazing somewhere."

ELIZABETH

Were you, dear?

MARGARETTA

Yes, who wouldn't be? And then, why did n't you come back *together*, arm in arm, you know, sort-er walkin'-down-the-aisle-wise?

ELIZABETH

I needed to be alone.

MARGARETTA

I do n't understand.

ELIZABETH

Do n't you?

MARGARETTA

No.

ELIZABETH

Well, perhaps you can't, dear. But if all *your* grays had been turned golden, if everything that was gold before had grown . . . celestial; if *your* little body had been suddenly set quivering with a mystery that made your soul's song one

with the sea and stars—Margaretta,  
Margaretta, *then* you would understand. *A pause*

MARGARETTA

Yes, dear, *if*.

ELIZABETH

Come.

There, there—your soul's still such a  
funny little chrysalis; but it soothes me  
to feel it, dear.

*Seating herself near the table.  
Margaretta, sitting in Elizabeth's lap, nestles her head  
against her shoulder*

MARGARETTA

Really?

ELIZABETH

And now I'm warm again.

MARGARETTA

Did *Ma* frizzle you?

*Sitting up, wide-eyed*

ELIZABETH

No. But it chilled me to see that her  
soul, you know, was still so much more  
frightened than *she* was trying not to be.

MARGARETTA

Elizabeth, can you pry into my insides  
like that?

ELIZABETH

Sometimes.

*A pause*

The way she felt scares me a little even  
now. I'm afraid she thinks—. Tell  
me, what *does* she think of me?

**MARGARETTA**

*Getting up.*

**ELIZABETH**

Yes!

**MARGARETTA**

Really?

**ELIZABETH**

*Leaning forward, intensely*

**MRS. WATSON**

*Re-entering, right*

**ELIZABETH**

*Rising*

**MRS. WATSON**

My son.

**ELIZABETH**

No. No, I can't have. I do n't know.  
We took different roads, you see.

**MRS. WATSON**

Really?

Very well.

**ELIZABETH**

Won't you wait here for him? He's  
surely on his way.

**MRS. WATSON**

I'm afraid I should disturb you two.

MARGARETTA

Not in the least, Mommy.  
Will she, dear?

ELIZABETH

Do stay, Mrs. Watson.

*Supremely*

*To Elizabeth*

*Mrs. Watson sits down to her  
embroidery*

MARGARETTA

As I was just going to say, Elizabeth,  
Mommy thinks . . .  
that you're charming.

*With roguish sternness*

*Relenting*

ELIZABETH

Really?

MARGARETTA

Yes. And . . . and exquisite.

ELIZABETH

"Truly-ruly?"

MARGARETTA

And . . . and . . . a genius!

ELIZABETH

Really?

MRS. WATSON

Yes.

*With gentle humor*

*A pause*

MARGARETTA

But then she thinks you're —

ELIZABETH

Well?

MARGARETTA

Unconventional!

MRS. WATSON  
Margareta!

ELIZABETH  
Um?

*With a quizzically birdlike nod*

MARGARETTA  
*And —*

ELIZABETH  
And *what*, dear?

MARGARETTA  
Freakish!

MRS. WATSON  
My child!

MARGARETTA  
*Maliciously*  
Fresh!

MRS. WATSON  
Be still, Margareta!

MARGARETTA  
Light!

ELIZABETH  
Oh!

*Standing up, reproachfully*

*As Mrs. Watson also gets up*

*Pompously*

MARGARETTA  
And in comparison with *Ralph* —  
who is “rooted in generations of  
strength” — rather weak.

ELIZABETH  
Perhaps so . . . yes . . .

MRS. WATSON

Margaretta, you're simply unpardonable.  
Miss Wood, if you will come to me a  
little later, I will explain what Marga-  
retta has so misstated.

*As Elizabeth walks noiselessly  
away*

ELIZABETH

You are very kind, Mrs. Watson.

*Turning*

MARGARETTA

"Misstated?" Understated — not stated  
at all! Great Gosh! with her whims  
and her notions about being "rooted in  
generations of strength," and then her  
letters to Dad, why we've just *got* to be  
candid. Anyhow I shall be, and if you  
are n't, why then you *are* weak — very.  
Elizabeth.  
Elizabeth!  
Elizabeth!  
Dearest. Forgive me.  
I *didn't* mean to hurt.

*Mrs. Watson goes out to the  
right*

*After an astonished pause*

*Seeing Elizabeth quiver*

*No answer*

*Silence*

*Her arms about her*

*Kneeling*

ELIZABETH

There's nothing to forgive, dear; it's  
true, I *am* weak.

*Raising Margaretta's face  
with her right hand, while  
with the left she smooths back  
the hair*

MARGARETTA

But — but you *won't* be, dear?

*Ralph appears at the French  
window*

ELIZABETH

No, I hope not, I hope not.

*Her eyes fixed on Ralph*

RALPH  
May I come in?

ELIZABETH  
May you?

MARGARETTA  
“Sweet dreams, Margaretta”?

ELIZABETH  
You’ll tell your mother he’s back,  
won’t you, and then — to bed, dear?

MARGARETTA  
Yes, but I’m to come for you at sunrise?

ELIZABETH  
“Sure!”

MARGARETTA  
Good night.

Dear old man, good night.

RALPH  
Sleep tight.

MARGARETTA  
One more?

ELIZABETH  
Yes, and now —  
Scoo-oo-oo-oo-oot!

*Getting up and dodging back  
as Ralph enters and takes both  
of Elizabeth’s hands*

*Facing her*

*After a disconcerted instant,  
embracing and embraced  
Her hand on Ralph’s shoulders*

*Kissing her*

*To Elizabeth*

*Forcing herself to chase her  
with hand-clappings*

*Margaretta goes out right,  
leaving the door ajar*

*Elizabeth, returning and passing  
Ralph slowly, sinks into  
Mrs. Watson’s chair*

RALPH

Elizabeth! You have n't been doubting  
yourself?

Of course not. You are n't so cow-  
ardly. And *I* never used to be a coward.  
I was n't even much afraid of not win-  
ning you —

*As her eyes seek his*

ELIZABETH

Ralph!

*Arcbly*

RALPH

— But coming back, alone under the  
stars, I met the fear of losing you. And I  
found that only years of life with you  
could lift me high enough to face it.

ELIZABETH

I'm glad you think I help you.  
And you know I'm even rather glad  
that you were morbid? *I* can't always  
cage my black-winged thoughts  
and free the nightingales.

*She looks away and her hand  
moves over Mrs. Watson's  
embroidery*

*Looking up.*

RALPH

Something *has* been troubling you.

ELIZABETH

Yes, I was afraid, I'm still afraid, that  
you're building on illusions.

RALPH

Nonsense!

ELIZABETH

No, Ralph. You're even and wise and strong, dear, so you don't see that I'm impulsive, freakish, weak.

RALPH

But *Elizabeth* —

ELIZABETH

Another thing: I'm afraid that even *you* can't change me very fast.

RALPH

*Change you! Change you! You, Elizabeth!* I would n't have you different —

ELIZABETH

Come, do n't protest too much. It is n't "moderate."

RALPH

Great Heaven . . . !

ELIZABETH

*Roguishly* S-s-sh! Do n't swear, dear. It is n't "conventional."

RALPH

And suppose it *is n't*.

MRS. WATSON

*Outside* Margaretta!

RALPH

Elizabeth! You look as if the universe were coming to an end.

ELIZABETH

*Half to herself*

She is wise . . . terribly . . .

MARGARETTA

*Outside*

Mummy ! If you interrupt 'em, your  
blood be on your head !

That's a kind, considerate Mummy.  
Good night.

*A pause*

*The door shuts*

ELIZABETH

*In quiet delight*

She's gone !

RALPH

*Stalking to the door and back  
again*

I see it now. What you were saying  
about being freakish and weak, my  
mother didn't say to you, of course.  
But she did say it ?

ELIZABETH

Yes.

RALPH

*After another turn*

Try as she will, dear, I'm afraid she'll  
*never* understand you. But when she's  
once accepted you —

ELIZABETH

*Getting up*

If she accepts me !

RALPH

She will. And when she does, will  
you —

ELIZABETH

Do all I can to understand her ? and see  
things

*With a little shiver*

as she does? . . . for your sake? That *is* what you were going to say, *is n't* it? Yes, I will. But now, I *must* tell you why, in all these minutes that ought to have been radiant, I've been so little . . . the girl you love.

RALPH

Moods can't change *you*, dear.

ELIZABETH

Do you know what I really am? I'm not "rooted," like you, "in generations of strength." My weakness is rooted in weakness. My mother—

RALPH

I know, I know.

ELIZABETH

No, not what I know; that her joy must once have been too passionately exquisite for this world, and her sorrow so terrible that sometimes, even in the later years, I've seen her shaken to the depths with great gusts of it.

RALPH

That I didn't know; even now I do n't quite understand.

ELIZABETH

Nor I.

*A silence*

But it shows me how deep my wildness

and my weakness lie. . . . Ralph, ought you, with all the great things that depend on you, ought you to hamper yourself with *me*?

RALPH

I'm nothing without you.

ELIZABETH

*With wistful gayety*

Nonsense, nonsense.

RALPH

No, dearest, *sense*. Since you 've lit up my world for me, problems that used to be dark and shapeless have glimmered into crystals. I begin to see almost a new universe.

ELIZABETH

*Laughing*

Because of *me*, Ralph?

RALPH

Because of you.

ELIZABETH

Then you 'll take me, still?

RALPH

*Take* you?

ELIZABETH

Just as I am? Whatever I am?

RALPH

*Kissing her*

Yes! Yes!

ELIZABETH

You may have to do it pretty soon, then!

RALPH

*Have to?*

ELIZABETH

I may make you . . . make off with me  
. . . to-morrow.

RALPH

*Half delighted, half incredulous*

Elizabeth !

ELIZABETH

Yes. If your *father's* going to analyze  
and dissect me, if he begins, even con-  
siderately, to sort and pigeon-hole my  
traits —

RALPH

That's not his way. He's whole-  
hearted, straight-forward, impulsive,  
with all his firmness !

ELIZABETH

But your mother's been writing.

RALPH

Not to prejudice him !

ELIZABETH

But if she *has* by mistake, if for any rea-  
son he's cold, you won't wait, will you,  
to see my soul sliced and put on a slide  
and stared at through a microscope ?

RALPH

Do you realize what men would say  
if I "made off with you" ?

ELIZABETH

I know, I know, just what they have said, that you're so rich and I, so poor. I used to mind that. But now, I'm glad you can have the fun of giving me things.

RALPH

So am I, very. But that is n't it. The things they'd say now, dearest, would seem almost to lower our love.

ELIZABETH

That can't be lowered.

*A coach horn is heard*

RALPH

Not for us —

*It sounds again, nearer*

ELIZABETH

Hark! He's coming. And that horn of his would sound like the last trump to me if we could n't . . . just ride away. It is n't that I mind the pain, Ralph — at least I think not — but the pettiness, the ugliness.

RALPH

Do n't think you must plead with me. If it is n't all gladness, if there's a word of questioning —

*Seeing her sensitiveness*

ELIZABETH

We'll ride off and away? with the breath of sunrise in our faces and the dew on the grass and the branches?

RALPH

And the sea booming on the rocks.

ELIZABETH

And then, after a day all joy in the mountains, when we're married, you and I, shall we come back and confound them?

RALPH

Yes!

*Indistinct voices are heard outside to the right*

ELIZABETH

He's here!

RALPH

That's his voice.

ELIZABETH

No, I do n't want to see him yet.

*Turning toward the door to the left, playfully*

Good night! Good-bye! Say I went to bed exhausted, hours and hours and hours ago. But come and tell me what he says. And if he does n't just hug the idea of me,

then at sunrise—?!

*Going out*

RALPH

We'll have our gallop.

CURTAIN

A C T I I



*Mr. Watson's room. A window to the right; near it, a closet door. To the left, back, another door; on the left, forward, a third. In the center of the room, a large plain table with a green-shaded student lamp, an inkstand, a pile of letters and telegrams, a few books, a photograph of Elizabeth. To the left of the table, a leather-covered armchair; to the right, a lighter chair of wood; against the wall, right, a third chair. In the whole gray room, no ornaments, only a portrait of Mrs. Watson hanging to the left, and over the door at the back, two flags.*

MRS. WATSON

Are you sure you won't have supper?

MR. WATSON

Quite, thank you. I stopped at the Commodore's, you see; a miraculous dinner, soufflés, jellies, champagne. After that, anything else would be a sacrilege!

Yes . . . Yes . . .

Where's Ralph?

MRS. WATSON

There's another, John, in cipher. I know, because they telephoned it first, as usual.

MR. WATSON

After me again, those brokers?

"In view of rumors, mining stocks fall.  
Do I wish to sell out my interest?"

*Entering, left front, and turning as Mr. Watson, in a light woolen traveling suit, follows her into the room*

*Looking over the telegrams*

*Putting them down*

*Pointing to the table*

*Opening the telegrams*

*Translating by means of a code-book which he takes from his pocket*

*Tossing aside telegram and book*

Nonsense! . . . "They await my reply"? They *can* wait.— Where's Ralph, Mabel?

MRS. WATSON

I left him with this friend of Margaretta's.

*Smiling*

*Ironically*

MR. WATSON

Margaretta's? And Margaretta? She's with them?

*Grave*

*A pause*

MRS. WATSON

No, in bed.

She left word, though, twice, that you were to kiss her in her sleep. Her soul, she "guessed," would "know it and hug you."

*Laughing*

MR. WATSON

How like her; the "hug," I mean. The "soul" sounds rather . . . different.

MRS. WATSON

She *has* been changing.

MR. WATSON

Not losing her drollery?

MRS. WATSON

No. If anything, that's grown on her.

MR. WATSON

Good! Good! But, Mabel, I've been thinking about her a good deal in crossing the plains.

*Winding his watch and laying it on the table*

MRS. WATSON  
And what came of it?

*Seating herself at the table*

MR. WATSON  
Well, in the end . . .  
in the end it seemed to me that if you  
or I should die, Mabel, or if any great  
shock should come to her, she'd grow  
up in a *twinkling*.

*He takes off his coat and waist-coat, hangs them in the closet, puts on his smoking jacket and comes back*

MRS. WATSON  
She *is* growing up.

MR. WATSON  
You don't mean she's got sentimental?

MRS. WATSON  
Far from it. But this extraordinary  
friend of hers seems to have opened her  
eyes almost startlingly on life.

MR. WATSON  
Um.  
I don't wonder. Even your rather  
guarded letters gave me an impression of  
great charm.

*Lighting a cigar*

Has Ralph been here all along?

*A pause*

MRS. WATSON  
Yes, breaking promise after promise to  
pay visits, on the Shore and in the Adi-  
rondacks.

MR. WATSON  
Will she take him?

*Smiling*

MRS. WATSON

*Without a smile*

From what Margaretta says, I'm afraid  
she will, unless you interfere.

MR. WATSON

Why, you wrote she was delightful,  
almost a genius—

MRS. WATSON

Yes; but weak!

MR. WATSON

Does Ralph need a Hercules?

MRS. WATSON

— And they're both so in the clouds!

MR. WATSON

Such a rare symptom!

MRS. WATSON

Don't be sarcastic, John; I'm *troubled*,  
really.

My reasons sound paltry, I know, and  
yet . . . their love is such a tissue of  
dreams and folly and song that I can't  
imagine it surviving the strains of life.

MR. WATSON

Need there be strains? There's money  
enough. As for other things . . .  
she won't have to suffer as you had to  
suffer . . . He won't have to suffer as I  
had to suffer in telling . . . you before  
we were married—

*He lays down his cigar*

*He falls silent, a look of pain*

*crossing his face.*

MRS. WATSON  
John!

*Gently, as she leans across the table*

MR. WATSON  
As you wish, Mabel.  
You're right.

*Taking her hand a moment  
Getting up  
A pause*

That's past. And now, at this very moment, perhaps, Ralph and she are planning out their life.  
Would you have me thwart them?

*After a turn across the room*

MRS. WATSON  
Only for *their* sake.

MR. WATSON  
For *their* sake?

*Taking a revolver from his hip-pocket and fingering it as he walks up and down*

It turned out useless, you know, my taking this with me. There was n't a miner in Idaho that could n't have "got the drop on me." Won't *they* be a good deal like that?

*A pause. He puts down the revolver*

MRS. WATSON  
You brought your *men* to their senses.

MR. WATSON  
Mabel, in such a love as Ralph's must be, there's something that I for one hate to interfere with.  
In spite of its folly, if there *is* folly in it, it may lift a man higher than he'd climb without it.

*Another pause*

MRS. WATSON

Yes, John.

MR. WATSON

And still you'd break this off?

MRS. WATSON

*Puzzled* Yes, almost; yes, I *would*.

MR. WATSON

You, who've always pleaded for his independence, and held me back—held me back rightly—when I've wished to oppose him?

MRS. WATSON

*Almost impatiently* Yes.

MR. WATSON

But why? Tell me. You can't wish me to follow with *tight* shut eyes.

MRS. WATSON

I've said all I can say.

MR. WATSON

You mean they're things you've no right to say?

MRS. WATSON

No.

MR. WATSON

Well then? Can't you explain them?

MRS. WATSON

No, John. They're simply... too impalpable.

MR. WATSON

*Walking up and down*

And you wish me to destroy what seems  
to Ralph the highest possibility in his  
life, because of impalpable nothings?  
It's preposterous, Mabel. Think! I  
don't even know the girl's name.

MRS. WATSON

*As he turns away*

You'll know it soon enough with Mar-  
garettas dinnin in your ears of Eliza-  
beth this, Elizabeth that, Elizabeth the  
other—

MR. WATSON

Elizabeth? A *name* to suit even you, I  
should think.  
Who's *this*?

*Suddenly stopping in front of  
Elizabeth's photograph*

MRS. WATSON

That? Why, "Elizabeth."

MR. WATSON

A wonderful face, Mabel.

*Knocking outside*

MARGARETTA

*Entering, left front, with a  
rough bath-wrap around her*

Can I come in?

*Hugging him*

Home, Daddy?

Dear old Daddy! Darling Dad!

MR. WATSON

Why, Margaretta! How you've changed!

MRS. WATSON

You ought to be abed.

MARGARETTA

*To Mrs. Watson*

With that pesky telephone raising Cain  
in my very ears?

*To Mr. Watson*

That reminds me of your crazy cipher,  
Dad. "Pike's. Idaho, August 17, '99.  
Delayed in transmission. Columnar.  
Antelope. Cash. Cod. James Beard."  
What's it mean?

MR. WATSON

How should I know?

MARGARETTA

*Hugging him again*

*Leaning back*

Oh, you duck, you duck of a Dad!  
But isn't it foolish!! "Columnar. An-  
telope. Cash. Cod. James Beard." And  
this—they just 'phoned it over—"Pon-  
der. Judex. S. & B." What do you  
s'pose it means? Eh, old man? "Ponder."

MR. WATSON

Just business, dear.

MARGARETTA

Oh, you've found her, have n't you! I  
put her there for that. Is n't she beau-  
tiful? Just *is n't* she?

MR. WATSON

*Haunted*

Yes . . .

MRS. WATSON

John, ought not Margaretta to write  
down these telegrams before she forgets  
them?

MARGARETTA

I shan't forget 'em. "Columnar. Antelope. Cash. Cod. James Beard." "Ponder. Judex. S. & B." "Columnar. Antelope. Cash. Cod." "Ponder. Judex." Dad, what *can* such truck mean?

MR. WATSON

Look it up, and write it out for me.  
Elizabeth *what*, Mabel?

MARGARETTA

Did n't Momps even tell you her name?  
Why, Mommy, you evil, evil-minded  
Mommy!

MRS. WATSON

I can't remember everything when I  
write, Margaretta.

MARGARETTA

Not even Elizabeth's name?  
"Columnar. Antelope. Cash . . ."

MR. WATSON

Her name, Mabel?

MRS. WATSON

Her name? Wood.

MR. WATSON

What?

MRS. WATSON

Wood, Elizabeth Wood.

*Giving her the code-book  
While she sets to work near  
the lamp*

*Looking up*

*Suddenly bending over the book*

MARGARETTA

*Muttering* "Rioting recommences"?!

MRS. WATSON

What's that, Margaretta?

MR. WATSON

Wood? Don't you mean "Woods"?

MRS. WATSON

No, just the singular.—Margaretta . . .

MARGARETTA

"Wires cut"?

MR. WATSON

What . . . was her mother's name?

MRS. WATSON

You know about her mother? You always know about singers, don't you!

MARGARETTA

"Mine's afire"!?"

MRS. WATSON

Margaretta, what is it?

MARGARETTA

"Miners . . ."

MR. WATSON

Mabel, tell me! Her mother's name?!"

MRS. WATSON

Why, John, what's happened to you?

MR. WATSON

Nothing, I hope. But—

MARGARETTA

“—Miners seize dynamite.”

MRS. WATSON

Margareta! Read it.

MARGARETTA

Let me finish first, Momps.

MR. WATSON

Tell me her mother's name.

MRS. WATSON

Why, John, are you insane?! With a fortune hanging in the balance, to insist on bagatelles?—Margareta!

MARGARETTA

*Still busily transcribing*

“Ponder.”

MRS. WATSON

Margareta!

MR. WATSON

*Mabel . . .*

MRS. WATSON

*Impatiently*

Her mother's name? Yes, yes. Let me see. What *was* her mother's name? Clara? Clare?

MR. WATSON

Clare.

MRS. WATSON

Yes, that's it, I think,—Clare, Clare Wood.

*To Margareta*

Have n't you finished that yet, child?

MR. WATSON

*Clare?!*

MARGARETTA

I'm afraid we're dished, Daddy.

*Reading*

"Pike's, Idaho, August 17, '99. Delayed in transmission. John Watson, Bar Harbor, Maine. Rioting recommences. Wires cut. Mines afire. Miners seize dynamite. James Beard."

MRS. WATSON

It can't be true, John. Tell me it is n't true!

MARGARETTA

Cheer up, Daddy; the worst is yet to come.

MRS. WATSON

John, think. Surely something can be done. Can't you sell, even at a loss, before this is known?

MARGARETTA

*Sell, Mommy?*—and smash the little stockholders and wreck the whole property?

MRS. WATSON

Be still, Margaretta. You can't understand these things.

MARGARETTA

*But, Mommy—*

MRS. WATSON

Be still.

MARGARETTA

Don't you want to hear t' other one?  
Listen, Dad. "New York, August 18th,  
7 P.M. John Watson, Esq., Bar Harbor,  
Maine. On rumors of further riot-  
ing, stock has fallen to sixteen. Await  
advices. S. & B."

MRS. WATSON

John! Think, think for us.

*Helplessly*

MR. WATSON

Your pencil, Margaretta.

*Writing*

"Messrs. Stone & Blackwell, 6 Wall St.,  
New York City. Hold at any cost.  
J. W." There, telephone that at once.  
Good night.

MRS. WATSON

For the children's sake . . . !

MARGARETTA

Poor dear Daddy. Good night. Don't  
you care, Daddy. It'll all come out in  
the wash.

Good night.

*Kissing him*

MR. WATSON

Quick!

MARGARETTA

*Good* night.

*Cheerily*

*She goes out back*

MRS. WATSON

And you said a great shock would change her.

MR. WATSON

Mabel, was Clare Wood the whole name?

MRS. WATSON

Still harping on that? Does our loss mean nothing to you?

MR. WATSON

There are worse things than loss. I can retrieve that.

MRS. WATSON

*Worse* things? What worse things?

MR. WATSON

Don't keep me in suspense. *Was* there another name?

MRS. WATSON

Clare Wood?—Let me see.—Yes, Clare Wood-Mayano. “Mlle. Clare Wood-Mayano.”

John!—Look at me.

MR. WATSON

God! God! They have n't deserved it. Even Clare, even I, never deserved such punishment. And did n't we suffer enough—too much?! With her ten-

*Mr. Watson sinks into a chair, his head between his arms on the table  
Their eyes meet*

*After a long pause, standing*

derness and beauty—it *had* to be! it *had* to be! Yet . . . the desolation . . .

MRS. WATSON

What *is* this?

MR. WATSON

And now my child . . . *mine* . . .

MRS. WATSON

Be calmer. Try to control yourself.

MR. WATSON

Ralph . . . *loves* her!

*A long pause. Singing is heard outside*

MRS. WATSON

And I was talking of your ruin.

MR. WATSON

Is that Elizabeth?

MRS. WATSON

Yes, John.

MR. WATSON

How like her . . . mother's voice.

MRS. WATSON

Don't speak of her!

*In broken tones*

MR. WATSON  
With her voice in my ears? No. You've held me still too long.

*Standing*

Silence can't strangle sins. Unless we acknowledge them, they live, they pursue, torture us: for all our repentance they punish us and our children.— Mabel,

if you had n't forbidden me to tell you even Clare's name, you would have known that Elizabeth . . .

*He turns away*

*A knock*

*Knocking again*

*Again knocking*

**MRS. WATSON**

I meant only the right.

**MR. WATSON**

We all of us *meant* the right.

**MRS. WATSON**

John, she 's knocking. Shall I send her away?

**MR. WATSON**

No.

**MRS. WATSON**

Shall I go, then?

**MR. WATSON**

Yes.

*After a pause*

*She goes out by the door, back  
Slow repeated knocking. Mr.  
Watson goes unsteadily to  
left-front, and stands there  
with his hand against the  
door as if to hold it shut*

**MR. WATSON**

Elizabeth!

**ELIZABETH**

Mr. Watson, it 's I, Elizabeth Wood.  
May I come?

MR. WATSON

*Under his breath*

No! No!

ELIZABETH

I shall if you don't say no.

*Entering as he opens the door,  
and speaking furtively*

I thought, I thought Mrs. Watson would be here. But I've introduced myself already, have n't I, through a two-inch plank?! Won't you shake hands with me?

MR. WATSON

*Taking her hand*

I'm glad, Elizabeth, that you're here.

ELIZABETH

Then you won't think me too wild — for coming, I mean? Ralph was to tell all about me first; but when I saw him pacing up and down the garden, thinking, thinking, thinking — how to put it, I suppose — I decided perhaps you'd better

*With a slight gesture*

just see for yourself.

*Guilelessly looking up  
Her hand on his shoulder*

Why, how worn you look! It's selfish of me, is n't it, to keep you talking now when you need to rest.

MR. WATSON

*Gently*

That is n't it.

ELIZABETH

Has Mrs. Watson been frightening you,

then? Though she *is* so darling, I know she can't quite approve of me. She thinks I'm weak. And there she's wise, bitterly.

You must help me, you who've always been so strong.

MR. WATSON

*I?*

ELIZABETH

Why, yes.

Mr. Watson,  
if I've hurt you, it's unknowingly.  
You'll believe that, won't you?

MR. WATSON

Yes . . .

ELIZABETH

But I have hurt you?

MR. WATSON

No; not you.

ELIZABETH

And still you wish to be alone?

MR. WATSON

It's better so.

ELIZABETH

Good night, Mr. Watson.

MR. WATSON

Elizabeth, first, may I have—a kiss?

ELIZABETH  
Why, yes! yes!

Your eyes now seem almost like Ralph's  
for tenderness.

*Looking up for a kiss on the  
lips*  
*As he takes her head between  
his hands and kisses her on  
the forehead*

MR. WATSON

Yours take me back....

*A silence*

RALPH

Father! Why, Elizabeth, ahead of me?

*Entering, with decision*

ELIZABETH

Yes; and I think I've won him.

*To Mr. Watson*

RALPH

If not, it's a miracle.

You *have* fallen in love with her? at  
first sight? yourself? Candidly, have n't  
you?!

*Grasping his hand*

Why, I forgot I had n't seen you! How  
are you? Brown; but rather worn by  
the strike? Well, with rest and this  
happiness—!

MR. WATSON

*Happiness?*

*Overlooking his impression  
of bitterness*

RALPH

Is n't she already almost what you called  
my mother once?—you remember?—  
“Your lily from Paradise”?

**ELIZABETH**

I begin to think not, Ralph.

**MR. WATSON**

You *are* that and more to me.

*To Elizabeth  
Steeling himself*

And yet . . . and so—

**ELIZABETH**

“So”?

**RALPH**

Why, *father!*

**MR. WATSON**

—so I can’t—I would if I had the strength—I can’t talk with you now.

**ELIZABETH**

*Offering her hand*  
Good night, Mr. Watson.

**MR. WATSON**

*Taking her hand*  
Try not to judge me harshly.

**ELIZABETH**

I can’t understand you. But I know you wouldn’t give me pain unless . . . unless . . .

*Turning toward the door*

Good night.

**MR. WATSON**

Good night, Elizabeth.

**ELIZABETH**

*To Ralph, who follows her*  
No, Ralph, stay!

*She goes out, left-front*

**RALPH**

*Turning as the door shuts*  
How can you let worldliness weigh

against such gentleness? How could you let her go?!

MR. WATSON

*After a pause*

I have been talking with your mother—

RALPH

My mother?

MR. WATSON

Yes.

RALPH

My decision's made.

MR. WATSON

Very well, Ralph. But before you . . . carry it out, I must tell you certain things. First, my affairs just now are in a critical state.

I've received telegrams this evening which mean that we must live very carefully for a while. The rioting has begun again; the mines are on fire.

*Indicating the papers on the table*

RALPH

I'm sorry, sir.

MR. WATSON

*Wincing at the "sir"*

I might have sold out, Ralph; but the loss would have been ruinous. As it is, we shall recover in the end.

*He stops to study Ralph's face*

RALPH

And meantime you think that I can't support my wife?

MR. WATSON

Not that you can't. But the scientific work you care for . . .

RALPH

Is unremunerative. Yes, I know.

MR. WATSON

Have you a right to sacrifice it?

RALPH

I think so.

MR. WATSON

*After pacing across the room and back*  
Very well. There's another thing which I hoped to put off. — Sit down, please.

RALPH

*Taking out his watch*  
I—we both—need our night's sleep, I think.

MR. WATSON

Try not to be so hard.

RALPH

I? To you?!

MR. WATSON

I know I seem hard. Ralph, I *need* to be near you.

RALPH

If only we could be friends again! If you only would make it possible! But I can't understand you.

MR. WATSON

Sit down; listen.

You *shall* understand me.

*Seating himself also as Ralph obeys*

RALPH

Anything you can say will only separate us more.

MR. WATSON

Perhaps, and yet you *must* know.

Ralph, when I first knew your mother—or thought that I knew her—I drifted into what seemed deep friendship with the wife of—well, no matter about his name. Her tenderness and mystery brought me joy that grew into passion. It seemed to lift me above the real world. But the storm came. It brought us . . . to the earth.

*Controlling himself*

RALPH

You left her?

*A pause during which Ralph glances toward the portrait of his mother, then back at Mr. Watson*

MR. WATSON

I tried, with all my power, to make her let me claim her before the world. She had nothing but scorn—justly—for the “illusion” that had made me too weak to protect her against herself.

I have n’t seen her since. She hid herself away.

*A pause*

RALPH

Ah, now I know!

*Getting up suddenly*

MR. WATSON

Are you sure you understand?

RALPH

I understand and despise you.

*Mr. Watson stands to receive  
the blows*

Not for your sin—I could forgive you that—but for your trying to stifle love with tales of your “illusion”—trying to turn me to some . . . richer woman, as you turned . . . to my mother.

MR. WATSON

Ralph, listen—

RALPH

No.

Love can’t be turned; *can’t* be smothered. Its fire and light are so unquenchable, yet keen, that I can see all your pettiness as distinctly now as that—that—that!

MR. WATSON

*It blinds you.*

RALPH

*It has opened my blind eyes.*

MR. WATSON

But—

RALPH

No. It can’t be the icy communion that I see you plead for! Call it mystic if you

*Pushing pens and pencils  
across the table*

*Going to Mr. Watson’s side  
of the table*

will, her love and mine; but it's rich  
with the blood of life. It must be ful-  
filled.

*Turning to go*

Do you understand *me* now?

MR. WATSON

*Seizing him by the shoulder*

Stop.

RALPH

Let me go!

MR. WATSON

*Holding him by both shoulders*

Your love, Ralph, is *impossible*.

RALPH

I shall marry her — within twelve hours.

MR. WATSON

Ralph —

RALPH

Let me go!

MR. WATSON

Not till you understand —

RALPH

Let me go!

MR. WATSON

I am . . . her father.

*Shrinking back from him*

RALPH  
*Her father? You?*

*Suddenly*

You, father?

Father!

MR. WATSON  
I never knew it till tonight.

RALPH  
We thought we had scaled Heaven . . .

MR. WATSON  
If only I could have known. . . .

RALPH  
If it weren't for you—!

MR. WATSON  
Ralph, there *is* some comfort; you need  
not suffer as I have suffered.

RALPH  
*Getting up*  
You've lived and had your "pleasure"—

MR. WATSON  
Not my *pleasure*.

RALPH  
Yes—and a little pain—and years of  
happiness.

MR. WATSON  
Don't be . . . quite merciless!

RALPH  
You've *lived*—and you ask for mercy?  
Did you show mercy when you left her  
mother's sin to kill her? Did you show  
mercy when you gave life to Elizabeth  
. . . and me? By the justice of God—if  
there is one—you *deserve* no mercy. You

deserve all her mother's storms of pain;  
and the fire—forever—that burns in me  
now; and, for Elizabeth's sake . . .

MR. WATSON  
Forgiveness!

RALPH  
*Never!*

Thank God!

MRS. WATSON  
Is it over? May I come, John?

RALPH  
He's fainted, mother.  
You don't need me?

MRS. WATSON  
No. *She'll* need you more, I think.

*Going*

*Hearing Mr. Watson fall forward across the table, he turns back, strides to the table, and leaning over it, lifts his father's inert head, looks into his face, and after letting the head sink again, bends forward to listen for the sound of breathing.*

*Catching sight of the pistol under his father's right hand, he takes it up and unloads it, then after listening to the breathing a moment more, strides to the door, back, and knocks*

*Outside*

*As she comes in  
Seeing Mr. Watson she starts slightly*

*After a glance toward his father, he goes out, left*

CURTAIN



## ACT III



*Elizabeth's room, papered with blue, which is figured conventionally with slight lines of white; matted floor, white woodwork. Back, right and left, two large Japanese photographs, colored, in white frames. In the center, back, wide folding doors. Toward the back, left, a door; further forward, a broad divan; another door left front. To the right, two windows curtained with white muslin. Near the center, a square white table with a vase of gentians, a few books and a blue vase lamp shaded by a Japanese paper globe.*

*In front of the table, Elizabeth sits reading. She is dressed in a creamy dressing-wrapper of thin silk, belted in with a white silk cord. Putting down her book, she takes her watch from the table, glances at it, puts it back, and tries in vain to go on with her reading. There is a knock at the door.*

ELIZABETH

*Starting up*

Ralph!

MARGARETTA

*Entering left, back*

“Ralph”? At this time of night?  
Shocking!

ELIZABETH

You at this time of night? Shocking,  
Margareta, shocking, *shocking!*

MARGARETTA

*I've* a good reason . . .

ELIZABETH

He's coming to tell me what your  
“daddy” says. And, dear, if your “daddy”

does n't just long for this daughter-in-law . . .

MARGARETTA

Well, dear, what?

ELIZABETH

Nothing much.

MARGARETTA

But *what*?

ELIZABETH

Oh, just that Ralph and I—

MARGARETTA

Well? Ralph and you?

ELIZABETH

—at dawn—

MARGARETTA

*Reproachfully* Dawn, dearest?

ELIZABETH

—are going to gallop away and . . . get married!

MARGARETTA

Instead of walking with *me*?

*Elizabeth nods* Oh, you cussèd, dearest darling!

*After a long hug* But, Elizabeth, I saw Dad when he got home.

ELIZABETH

So did I.

MARGARETTA

Really?

ELIZABETH

Really.

MARGARETTA

But he didn't tell you that we're *dished*,  
did he?

ELIZABETH

*Surprised*

Why, no, dear.

MARGARETTA

Well, we are. Tin gone up the spout;  
Watsons dead broke!

ELIZABETH

*How?*

MARGARETTA

"Columnar. Antelope. Cash. Cod."  
That's how. No, I'm not off my  
head. That's cipher. I took it over  
the 'phone; and it means, "Rioting re-  
commences. Wires cut. Mine's afire.  
Miners seize dynamite,"—and the  
stock's fallen to sixteen.

ELIZABETH

Poor Mr. Watson . . . !

MARGARETTA

*Cheerily*

Oh, it does n't matter for him. He's a  
corker from Corkerville, and he'll clam-  
ber up again before Mommy's wiped her  
eyes! But *you*, you and Ralph—

ELIZABETH

*Thoughtfully* That's why he was so grave.

MARGARETTA

What can *you* do? That's what I've been thinking of all these hours.

ELIZABETH

It can't touch us, dear.

MARGARETTA

It can . . . put off your gallop.

ELIZABETH

*Gaily* Ask Ralph about that.

MARGARETTA

I *saw* Ralph an hour ago.

ELIZABETH

*Startled* Where?!

MARGARETTA

In the garden. I was leaning out the window, thinking; and I saw him there walking—and his head bowed down, oh, so sadly. I guess he was scheming—scheming schemes to support you. He can't get the professorship now, you see, that he tossed away last spring. So he'll have to drop science, and take to analyzing baking-powders and castoria—

ELIZABETH

Margarettta!

MARGARETTA

—and phosphates and soothing-  
syrups—

ELIZABETH

Margareta!!

MARGARETTA

—and fertilizers!

ELIZABETH

He shan't!

MARGARETTA

You've got to live, dear.

ELIZABETH

But I can support him. . . .

MARGARETTA

You?!

ELIZABETH

Listen.—Isn't that he?

Go, dear.

Go, go, go!

MARGARETTA

But you'll walk with me at sunrise?

That's in half an hour, you know.

ELIZABETH

Yes, I'll walk with you at sunrise  
unless we've galloped away!

Going?

*As a door is heard shutting*

*outside*

*Footsteps outside*

*Pushing her along*

*In the doorway, left, front*

*Margareta goes out*

*Listening to the footsteps,  
Elizabeth stands motionless  
whispering as they turn and  
recede*

*As they come nearer*

*As they grow faint*

*Hurrying back to knock on  
the folding door  
The folding doors, thrown  
open, show Ralph's laboratory  
with Bunsen burners, scales,  
test-tubes, etc., on shelves and  
benches, which flank an aisle  
leading to a large French win-  
dow. Ralph stands facing  
Elizabeth on the threshold*

*With attempted coolness*

Ah?

Again?

Ralph!! Why, Ralph!

**RALPH**

I hoped . . . perhaps you were dozing.

**ELIZABETH**

Dozing?—before I'd seen you? Hardly, dear. But, Ralph, what's kept you? Thinking of ways to propitiate him when we get back? For he *has* forced us to have our ride! I can see that, yes, clearly, clearly, in this awful gravity of yours. Do you know, dearest, it makes you look like *him*?

**RALPH**

Elizabeth, we can't "have our ride."

**ELIZABETH**

Can't we? Not really? I'm sorry for that. It would have made the day so blessed.

Think:—dawn with the air shot through and through with sunlight, and

*Going toward the windows,  
right*

the waves all fire, and little flames leaping along their ripples as we rode on to the sand; then the blast in our faces, and the spray . . .

*Turning to Ralph*

Oh Ralph, Ralph, the grandeur of that's too full for us to lose. Don't you think we might have it, even if your father does hug the thought of me!

RALPH

*Coming forward to her*

If it could give you happiness . . .

ELIZABETH

I know, I know; if he agrees, the adventure's all gone from it! Well, there's something sweet, after all, in sunny fields of consent. They're flat, of course. But . . . he did come round, chivalrously?

RALPH

Dearest, he could n't change.

ELIZABETH

Could n't?

*After an instant's thought*

Oh, I'm not so sure of that. In fact, I think he could.

RALPH

But you don't understand . . .

ELIZABETH

Yes, Margaretta's told me.

RALPH

Margaretta?

ELIZABETH

Did n't you hear her just as you came into the laboratory? No? Well, she was here, and she told me.

RALPH

*Incredulous* Margareta does n't know.

ELIZABETH

Yes, she does; she saw him; he told her.

RALPH

And *you* can still smile?

ELIZABETH

Why, yes! Would you have me cry? Mere millions don't matter to you and me. *Don't* worry! Now people can't say such critical things of me. And it's a reason for my appearing at once. And if I succeed—and I shall—why, you needn't... wallow in castoria and baking-powder and soothing-syrup and things, as that wretched Margareta's been proposing. I shall be able to support us in *luxury*—unless there are children...

RALPH

Elizabeth!

ELIZABETH

*Simply* Don't we hope for them, dearest? And after all, if I'm really a "genius," one

season of starring will support us for years and *years*.

RALPH

If supporting us were all . . .

ELIZABETH

What else could there be?

RALPH

There *is* something else; something that Margaetta has n't told you: something so terrible that I scarcely dare tell you.

ELIZABETH

*You* scarcely dare?

RALPH

Because it's . . . unspeakable.

*He falls helplessly silent*

ELIZABETH

You mean . . .

*Her hand on his shoulder,  
gently*

that you were tempted—that I must forgive you for thoughts of deserting me?

RALPH

I was n't—thank God—so cowardly as *that!* I've been hunting all these hours for some way to tell you gently . . . what came so horribly to me. I thought I had found it. But life flared up again and dazed me and shook me so, when I saw you . . .

*Her hand drops*

ELIZABETH

Well?

*A silence* What *is* it? Tell me.

RALPH

Elizabeth . . .

ELIZABETH

I must *know*.

RALPH

*His voice very low* While we live, what we hoped for . . . cannot be.

ELIZABETH

Cannot?

RALPH

Cannot.

ELIZABETH

But *why*?

*He is silent*

Ralph, it isn't true. You're not this sycophant! You could n't fall so from the sky to mere earth. Why, the very stars would laugh . . . through their tears . . .

*Seating herself on the arm  
of her chair* And yet—oh, it is!

RALPH

Dearest—

ELIZABETH

Don't speak.

RALPH  
Elizabeth.

*Softly*

ELIZABETH  
Be still.

*After a short wait*

RALPH  
Things are tragic enough as they are.  
Don't make them more tragic with  
misunderstanding.

*Getting up*

ELIZABETH  
I understand.

No, don't protest. It's clear enough.  
Perhaps you thought...you loved me;  
but wiser heads have shown you that...  
I'm light, and weak and unstable. And  
you think it the part of prudence—

*She turns away*  
*Without noticing him, she*  
*walks toward the windows,*  
*right*  
*Stilly*

RALPH  
No, nothing that you think! Nothing!  
Elizabeth!  
Elizabeth—

ELIZABETH  
*Don't break into my memory. That's*  
all I have now, the memory...of a  
dream. But oh, why couldn't you have  
been even a little what I thought you?  
Why not have made that beauty just a  
little yours? Even now, if you only  
could turn...But you prefer the life  
that you've chosen—weighing your

atoms, theorizing, experimenting, confirming . . . alone.

RALPH

Elizabeth, for my sake, for your sake, because I need you helplessly, let me tell you, if only I can . . .

ELIZABETH

Oh, your care for appearances! the calculations that kept you tramping, tramping there, devising "explanations"—it's worse than mere infamy. I could admire that. But this . . .

*He begins feeling in his waistcoat pocket*

*Suddenly taking out and holding before her a small bottle*

*She takes it*

*Reading the label*

*Wearily setting down the bottle on the table*

*He goes toward the door, back left. She sinks into a chair, her eyes fixed on him*

*Turning*

RALPH

Elizabeth, look.

Look, I say.

That was what kept me, tempting and tempting me, till thought for you gave me strength to conquer it.

ELIZABETH

"Tempting" you?

No, you would n't have dared to die.—Don't try to explain. Go! Do you understand? Go, unless you wish me to despise you even more!

Ralph!

RALPH

If I go, we shan't meet again; and you

will never understand. It's better so,  
perhaps . . .

ELIZABETH  
*Ralph.*

*He opens the door. Her  
hands grow rigid  
Almost inaudibly*

RALPH  
Elizabeth . . .

it might be easier for you to think I had  
never been the man you cared for. And  
so, if I could bear it, I should leave you;  
we should n't meet again.

ELIZABETH  
Is n't it best so?

*Shutting the door and turning  
Coming forward*

RALPH

No! What we knew, as we sat beside  
those waves under the stars, is too true  
for that. And there's still too much  
tragic wonder in the years that we must  
live. Trust me . . .

ELIZABETH  
*You?*

RALPH  
I have not sinned. I've blundered and  
confused you; but I haven't sinned.  
I'm stronger, truer than I ever was.  
Our suffering comes from others' guilt.  
Though our happiness is dead,  
Elizabeth, our love *must* live, like the  
sun's fire,

*With sorrowful tenderness*

*Taking her hand*

*Kneeling*

*His face between her bands*

and the hush . . of night . .

ELIZABETH

Ralph!

Your face is gray. Your hands burn.

Ralph, Ralph, your *pain*!

Oh, forgive me, forgive me for doubting you. Trust me. Let me share what's hurting you.

RALPH ,

It's too . . . horrible.

ELIZABETH

Let me bear it.

*Her arm about him, her head against his shoulder, she walks with him towards the laboratory*

*A long pause, during which, while he tells her, they are seen startlingly motionless, against the French window, through which the dawn appears over a near mountain*

*Coming back with him*

ELIZABETH

Our happiness on earth . . . How our souls sang under the stars. They're faded now, and that . . . *is* dead?

RALPH

Don't think of our joy. We can't bear to, yet.

ELIZABETH

Ralph, it isn't dead; it's alive still in my finding you again, all, all, more than I could dream you. That joy in your

dear tenderness, oh, let me feel the thrill  
of it,

so . . . so . . .

RALPH

Elizabeth . . . !

ELIZABETH

Must you wake me?

RALPH

This brings us too near to the gulf we 've  
escaped from. It is n't safe!

ELIZABETH

Not while we live.

RALPH

And we *must* live. We must not let  
ourselves be crushed. We must turn,  
fight, hew out the days . . .

ELIZABETH

Ralph, does the life that holds us sepa-  
rate mean much to you now?

RALPH

And yet we must serve it—  
must put all we 've lost tensely into the  
effort.

ELIZABETH

*Must we?*

RALPH

You will? for our love's sake, for my  
sake?

*As they seat themselves on the  
divan, she draws him to her  
Their eyes meet; their lips meet*

*A long silence. He starts up*

*Looking up gently*

*Knocking outside the labora-  
tory*

ELIZABETH

*Knocking*

I'll try, Ralph

MRS. WATSON

*Outside the laboratory*

May I come?—I, your mother?

RALPH

Shall I tell her to come?

ELIZABETH

*Dazed*

Your mother . . .

MRS. WATSON

Shall I come?

ELIZABETH

*Painfully*

No . . .

RALPH

Shall I go to her?

ELIZABETH

But don't stay long from me.

RALPH

I'll come back . . .

*With the saddest smile of consent*

*He strides off through the laboratory. A door is heard to open and shut. A long silence*

*Whispering*

ELIZABETH

Effort . . . to serve the life that separates us? Effort? alone?

Must I? Can I?

Ralph!

*She walks back and forth, looking toward the laboratory. Passing the table she sees the bottle, hesitates, picks it up, looks at it, lays it down*

I can't!

*She picks it up again and seating herself on the divan, sits long in thought. She uncorks the bottle, lifts it to her lips, hesitates, drinks. Sitting with her thumb over the mouth of it, she waits; makes a movement as if to drink more; then with short little indrawn breaths, falls along the divan. After a long silence the door is heard opening outside the laboratory*

RALPH

Elizabeth! He wants to come to you.  
I told my mother to send him.  
Was I right? No? Shall I call her  
back?

ELIZABETH

*Standing against the light of sunrise in the doorway*

No, Ralph . . .

*Faintly*

RALPH

*Coming nearer*

How pale you are! I oughtn't to have  
left you. You've been suffering.

ELIZABETH

*In pain*

Yes. I was afraid to face . . . what you  
will conquer . . . alone.

RALPH

Not alone.

ELIZABETH

Yes, you'll live. Forgive me. I . . .  
wasn't strong enough.

RALPH

*Catching sight of the bottle  
Reaching out for it  
She bows her head*

You haven't . . .  
Elizabeth! No!

I'll get help for you. Keep your courage up—just a moment!

ELIZABETH

Don't leave me—not now.

RALPH

I must.

ELIZABETH

*Faintly*  
*Almost inaudibly*

It's useless. I can't be . . . saved.  
Your hand. Even now you're veiled from me. Nearer.

RALPH

*Sobbing*

Elizabeth!

ELIZABETH

*You* must be strong, dear. Don't be troubled. Nearer. So. Still nearer. Kiss me.—Oh, must I go . . . alone?

RALPH

Elizabeth, you have n't left me?

*Whispering*  
*Taking her hand he trembles;  
suddenly noticing her other  
hand, he takes the bottle; bends  
forward, kissing her; then  
standing, looks at the bottle;  
lets the hand in which he  
holds it sink; raises it almost to  
his lips; dashes it to the ground*

No! !

*On his knees beside the divan*

If only I might go with you. . .

MARGARETTA

Elizabeth!

Have you forgotten our walk? Elizabeth?

The sun's up; the sky's golden, the waves are all flame! You have n't gone on your gallop?!

Asleep?

Elizabeth . . .

Ralph, she is n't . . . ?

RALPH

Gone, Margaretta.

MARGARETTA

Gone?

MR. WATSON

May I come, Elizabeth?

Can you bear seeing me?

MRS. WATSON

Are you sure that *you* can bear it?

RALPH

Father! Go back! Wait! Not now!

MR. WATSON

Does *she* condemn me?

RALPH

She is at peace . . .

MR. WATSON

You don't mean what your face says!

*Outside, after partly singing*

*Elizabeth's song*

*Knocking outside, right*

*Coming in*

*Her hands on the head of*

*the divan*

*With a shudder*

*As Ralph rises*

*Staggering a little as she sinks*

*on her knees*

*Outside the laboratory*

*Coming through the laboratory supported by his wife*

*To her husband*

*Suddenly bearing, and striding toward them*

Not that?! Ralph! Can't you speak?  
Let me pass, Ralph; let me see her.

MARGARETTA

*Rising and meeting him*  
Don't look so, Father. See, her face  
smiles.

MR. WATSON

Though she died for my sin?

MRS. WATSON

For Margaretta's sake! John . . .!

RALPH

*Leading her aside*  
Let him speak, Mother.

MR. WATSON

*Kneeling*  
Elizabeth, forgive me! Forgive me! I  
never knew. Elizabeth!—The cruelty,  
the cruelty . . . when life seemed so  
sweet to her.

*He lets his head fall on the  
edge of the divan. A pause,  
during which Margaretta  
stands in pain, her hands  
vaguely lifted over her father's  
head. He takes Elizabeth's  
hand and kisses it*

Elizabeth . . . my child . . .

MARGARETTA

Father . . .

MR. WATSON

*To Elizabeth*  
Sweet little one . . .

MARGARETTA

Father!

MR. WATSON

*Must we still live?*

MARGARETTA

Yes, for her sake, we that are left.

RALPH

Yes, we *must* live . . . we that are left.

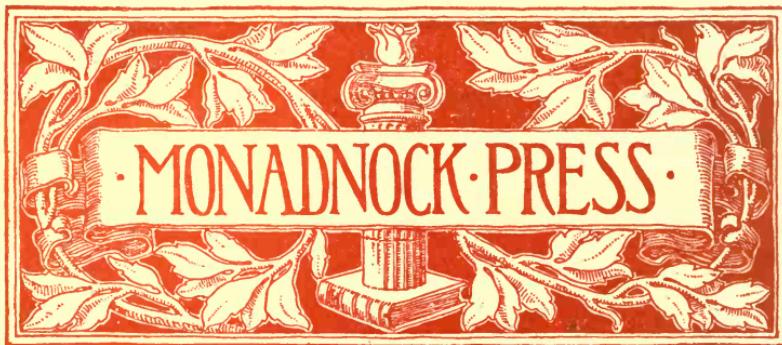
*Bending down and lifting  
him to his feet*

*She leads him out through  
the laboratory. Ralph and  
Mrs. Watson silently watch  
them pass. Then, while Mrs.  
Watson goes to the divan and  
kneels, Ralph sinks down  
in Elizabeth's chair*

*In hoarse, dead tones*

CURTAIN

OF THIS EDITION OF "THE FATHER," BY HENRY  
COPLEY GREENE, TWO HUNDRED AND  
FIFTY COPIES HAVE BEEN PRINTED  
AT THE MONADNOCK PRESS,  
NELSON, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
OCTOBER, 1904.









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✓ Greene, Henry Copley, 1871 -  
The father, a drama. Nelson, N.H., Monadnock  
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